

the

# Maryland natural resource

Vol. 19, No. 3 | Summer 2016

## ON THE COVER

On duty with state park lifeguards

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Coyotes in Maryland

Float-fishing on the North Branch

Community restoration at Cattail Creek





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THE NATURE OF CHANGE



From day one, our administration has been committed to enhancing and protecting our state’s wonderful natural treasures for the enjoyment and use of all our citizens.

From promoting free fishing days—where anglers can fish without a license or stamp—to organizing junior hunter field days—where kids learn about wildlife and conservation—we are actively engaging with the next generation of citizen scientists and stewards.

Educating our students and youth about our natural world is particularly important, and we continue to look for innovative ways to increase access to our state’s lands and waters.

That is why it was my pleasure to join with representatives from the National Park Service in April to announce Maryland’s participation in a national initiative designed to encourage everyone—particularly our youth—to get outside and visit our parks.

The Every Kid in a Park program provides free national park admission to fourth-grade students and their families. The idea is that creating a connection with nature while children are still young will help spur lifelong enthusiasm for the outdoors. Maryland has 72 fantastic state parks, and to learn more about this program or obtain a pass, please visit [everykidinapark.gov](http://everykidinapark.gov).

I am very pleased that our administration has joined this national effort to increase the accessibility to public lands and waters for children.

It is through these connections and innovative partnerships that we are changing Maryland for the better.

I hope you have a wonderful and safe summer.



  
Larry Hogan  
Governor

ABOVEBOARD



The Chesapeake Bay is getting cleaner. And you don’t have to take my word for it.

This past spring, the University of Maryland Center for Environmental Science released its 2015 Chesapeake Bay Report Card. The verdict? An overall C, signaling moderate but improving health.

This marks one of the highest grades since the university started such analyses in the mid-1980s. Compiled by university scientists, the report includes

data from various sources including federal and state agencies to review a standard set of indicators (fish species, nutrient levels, underwater grasses, water clarity and more).

The report shows that even during a non-drought year such as 2015 (droughts tend to reduce runoff), the overall health of the bay improved. Even with warmer-than-usual temperatures, the watershed has reached a level of resiliency needed in a recovering ecosystem. Moreover, each major section of the bay—from the Lower Eastern Shore to the Upper Western Shore—has demonstrated signs of improvement and stability. You can view the entire report at [umces.edu](http://umces.edu).

These results complement our own data and research, especially where it comes to the resurgence of underwater grasses. As you may already know, the department recently announced a record year for submerged aquatic vegetation with 53,277 acres surveyed in the bay. We are just four points from our 2017 restoration goals!

Even though this university report signals positive momentum, it does not mean that we will backtrack on our coordinated effort to accelerate and enhance restoration. The department will continue to lead efforts on the Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement and utilize every tool available until we go from merely passing to excelling.

  
Mark J. Belton  
Secretary

ASK AN EXPERT

What precautions should I take regarding the Zika virus?*(Cecilia in Cecil County)*

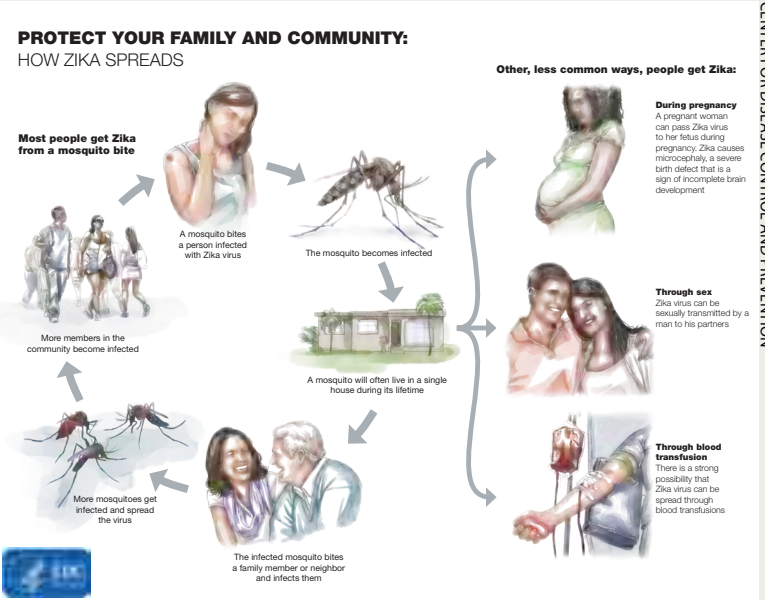
As mosquito season approaches, state officials urge residents to be vigilant in preventing the spread of Zika by eliminating mosquito breeding sites—especially those in residential areas. Zika is primarily spread through the bite of an infected Aedes mosquito, though it also can be sexually transmitted.

Most people infected with Zika do not know it. Symptoms—including fever, rash, joint pain and conjunctivitis (red eyes)—are relatively mild. The virus poses a significant threat to pregnant women, however, because it has been linked to birth defects.

As of May, there have been 16 confirmed cases of the Zika virus in Maryland. All involved travel to areas where the virus is more actively transmitted—the Caribbean, Central America and South America. The virus has not been transmitted locally, but that could change as Aedes mosquitoes become more active in warmer weather.

The best way to avoid Zika is to prevent getting bitten. Aedes mosquitoes breed in containers of any size that hold water. Regularly drain or eliminate containers of standing water around your home. The Maryland Department of Agriculture provides additional information, prevention tips, frequently asked questions and a series of public service announcements online at [mda.maryland.gov/zika](http://mda.maryland.gov/zika).

—BRIAN PRENDERGAST, DIRECTOR OF MOSQUITO CONTROL AT THE MARYLAND DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE



Quick References

- Maryland Department of Agriculture [mda.maryland.gov](http://mda.maryland.gov)
- Maryland Department of Health & Mental Hygiene [dhmh.maryland.gov](http://dhmh.maryland.gov)
- Center for Disease Control and Prevention [cdc.gov](http://cdc.gov)



How can I ensure my friends and family are safe on the water?*(Kenny in Kent County)*

The Maryland Natural Resources Police want all boaters to remember the importance of boating safely and always wearing a life jacket. Accidents can happen quickly and if you are not prepared, a fun day out on the water can turn into tragedy.

Here are some quick tips to keep in mind while out on the water:

- Always wear your life jacket! They float you don’t.
- Take a boating safety class.
- Designate a sober skipper! Alcohol and boating do not mix.
- File a float plan and/or let someone know your plans for the day.
- Make sure all your equipment is in good working condition.
- Mind your wake. You are responsible for the damage it may cause.
- Keep a proper lookout and avoid tunnel vision.
- Be respectful of all the other boaters enjoying our waterways.

Most importantly, have a fun and safe summer season with your family and friends, and remember, **always** wear your life jacket!

—JULIE BROWN, NATURAL RESOURCES POLICE BOATING SAFETY COORDINATOR

Send YOUR questions for our experts to [access.dnr@maryland.gov](mailto:access.dnr@maryland.gov).



# SHORT TAKES



Prepared dish

## Oyster Tacos, Chipotle Crema

Submitted by Lynne Laino; Serves 4

### Ingredients

1 dozen large shucked Maryland oysters  
2 eggs  
Adobo sauce from canned chipotles  
1 teaspoon onion powder  
2 boxes cornbread mix  
1 teaspoon ground cumin  
Oil for frying  
1 cup thinly sliced cabbage  
½ cup finely diced red pepper  
½ cup finely diced and seeded tomato  
1 cup sour cream  
2 tablespoons half-and-half  
4 6-inch flour tortillas

### Instructions

Drain oysters well. Whisk eggs with teaspoon adobo sauce and onion powder.

Put the dry cornbread mix in a large bowl and stir in the cumin.

Heat 2" of oil in a large frying pan over medium-high heat. Put oysters in egg mixture and gently toss. Coat oysters one at a time in cornbread mix and place in frying pan. Cook six at a time for 4-6 minutes or until golden. Drain on several layers of paper towels.

Put sour cream and half-and-half in a bowl and stir in one or two tablespoons of adobo sauce. Spoon into a plastic zip bag and cut a small hole in the corner. Heat each flour tortilla in a dry frying pan.

Put a bit of cabbage, pepper and tomato in the tortilla and top with three oysters, then drizzle with the chipotle crema.

Serve immediately.

LYNNE LAINO

## Record Number of Students Colored Maryland Green

Nearly 300 budding artists, grades K-12, submitted original artwork, film and poetry inspired by their appreciation for Maryland's great outdoors.

Communications and conservation staff selected 13 submissions—one entry from each age group in the drawing/painting, digital illustration and poetry categories, as well as one overall photograph and one overall video.

Winners received 2016 Maryland State Park Passports, which provide unlimited day-use entry for everyone in a car and unlimited boat launching at state park facilities.

View winning entries and honorable mentions at [flickr.com/accessdnr](http://flickr.com/accessdnr).



White Beauty drawing

ANDY WANG

## Keep Maryland Beautiful

In mid-May, the Maryland Environmental Trust awarded \$9,600 to nonprofits, community groups and schools to carry out environmental projects across the state.

The grants—which are given through the Keep Maryland Beautiful program in partnership with the State Highway Administration—are designed to help restore stream-side habitats, create gardens and educate citizens about the environment.

The following nonprofit youth groups received *Bill James Environmental Grants*:

- Captain Walter Francis Duke Elementary School (St. Mary's County)
- The Maryland Historical Society (Baltimore City)
- Mountain Laurel Garden Club (Garrett County)
- Queen Anne's County High School, AP Science Class (Queen Anne's County)
- Ward Museum of Wildfowl Art (Wicomico County)
- Watson Hall Montessori School (Baltimore County)

The *Margaret Rosch Jones Awards* were given to the following recipients to support ongoing community education projects that have demonstrated success in solving a local or statewide environmental issue:

- Master Gardeners Beekeeping Project, 4-H Foundation (Anne Arundel County)
- The Glen Echo Park Partnership for Arts & Culture (Montgomery County)
- Lake Roland Nature Council (Baltimore County)
- Midshore Riverkeeper Conservancy (Talbot County)
- Pigtown Main Street (Baltimore City)
- St. Luke's Episcopal Church (Anne Arundel County)
- Youghiogheny River Watershed Association (Garrett County)



Margaret Rosch Jones Award recipients at Pigtown in Baltimore

DEPARTMENT PHOTO

# DEPARTMENT NEWS

## Fee Reductions Set to Save Millions



Children playing at Patapsco Valley State Park

STEPHEN BADGER

In support of Governor Larry Hogan's fee elimination and reduction initiative, the Department of Natural Resources has reduced 11 entrance and permit fees.

These measures—which include lowering the cost of recreation and wildlife permits—will save citizens \$2.71 million over the next five years.

Additionally, military veterans may now visit Maryland State Parks for free on Veterans Day and at half price on all other days. Fourth graders and their families also gain free admittance to state parks as part of the national Every Kid in a Park program.

These reductions follow the first rollback made in September, in which the department decreased the price of several forest and wildlife licenses as well as Golden Age park passes.

Fee cuts and eliminations will not impact service delivery. Furthermore, the elimination of fees does not eliminate the requirement for individuals and businesses to apply for and receive necessary approvals to carry out regulated activity.

[governor.maryland.gov](http://governor.maryland.gov)

## Officials Adjust Chronic Wasting Disease Approach



Healthy deer

sease last winter in Allegany County. One was harvested near Cumberland, approximately 10 miles west of all previous cases, marking the first documented case outside of the original management area.

In response to this finding, the area has been expanded to include all of Allegany County and the western portion of Washington County. Wildlife officials have also lifted the ban on baiting deer within the area.

"Hunters are an essential part of combating the disease," says Wildlife Director Paul Peditto. "They help keep deer numbers in check, slow its spread, and provide us with additional data."

A total of 11 deer have tested positive in Maryland since 2010. Chronic wasting disease is a fatal neurological disease in deer, elk and moose. There is no evidence that humans are susceptible.

[dnr.maryland.gov/wildlife](http://dnr.maryland.gov/wildlife)



Widgeon grass in clear, mid-Bay water

DEPARTMENT PHOTO

## Bay Grass Abundance Indicates Restoration Progress

A key indicator of water clarity and quality, underwater grass abundance in Maryland's portion of the Chesapeake Bay increased 29 percent between 2014 and 2015, reaching a new record of 53,277 acres. This puts the state within 94 percent of its 2017 restoration goal.

The rise in growth is attributed not only to an expansion of "boom-or-bust" widgeon grass in portions of the mid-bay but also to a variety of freshwater grasses, like wild celery, that grow in the upper and fresher portions of the estuary.

Maryland's biggest and most resilient underwater grass bed, located in the Susquehanna Flats, has been steadily recovering since 2011, and reached more than 5,200 acres in 2015.

Water monitoring results for the Eastern Shore indicate long-term improvements in clarity as a result of reduced nutrients and sediments, which fuel algal growth and reduce the amount of available sunlight. Bay grasses in this region responded to the improving water conditions for the fourth consecutive year and are continuing to provide more blue crab habitat.

[dnr.maryland.gov/waters](http://dnr.maryland.gov/waters)

## Stay Connected

Eager for the latest department news, park happenings and program offerings? Sign up for our free email newsletter! Sent at the beginning of each month, this comprehensive rundown includes an update from Secretary Belton, a brief video, press releases, upcoming events and more. To enroll, go to [dnr.maryland.gov](http://dnr.maryland.gov) and click on Newsletters.





Fisheries technician Kenny Wampler with an 18-inch wild brown trout

## GO WEST —YOUNG ANGLER— GO WEST!

### Float-fishing on the North Branch By Alan Klotz

If you'd like the adventure of an entirely different trout fishing experience similar to that of the western states, look no further than the North Branch Potomac River.

#### We're off!

The Jennings Randolph Lake Dam in Garrett County supplies an abundant cold-water flow to the North Branch Potomac River to support a large river trout fishing opportunity. While you can wade in summer months or fish from the bank, a float-fishing trip in a raft or kayak is a unique way to experience all that this rolling river offers. Better yet, several fishing guide services are available to float anglers down the river and help you catch the trout of a lifetime!

The adventure begins at the catch-and-return area downstream of the Jennings Randolph Lake. Its cold, gin-clear water supports populations of wild brown, rainbow and brook trout. Stocked by the Maryland Fisheries Service, cutthroat trout also are caught.

Once floating this stretch, you will not see a house or passing car—only the steep

green mountain ridges on both sides of the river. Guide Harold Harsh of Spring Creek Outfitters has float-fished this river for nearly 25 years.

"The best fishing starts in June and runs through the end of November, if the weather holds," he says.

In an area abundant with bait, from ants and beetles to caddisflies, march browns, sulphurs and slate drakes, "The trout rise with gusto!" Harsh exclaims.

#### Float on

The river changes character as you enter Allegany County near the town of Westernport. Despite nearby industry, the river now supports a great fishery as many federal, state, private and non-profit organizations have worked together to improve water quality during the past three decades.

As a result, the river has become very productive and capable of producing some true trophy rainbow and brown trout. The river is managed by stocking fingerling trout that grow exceptionally well due to the abundant food supply of aquatic invertebrates and forage fish.

Access areas with boat ramps sit in both Westernport and the McCoolle Fishery Management Area, four miles downstream.

Maryland native and avid angler Neil Jacobs, who pursues trout from the Arctic Circle to South America, particularly enjoys fishing this section of the river.

"I fish the North Branch every opportunity I get," he says. "It's so convenient, and it provides trophy fish opportunities right here in my home state."

#### Phenomenal results

Continuing another five miles downstream to the Gary A. Yoder Fisheries Management Area at Black Oak provides another good day of floating.

Avid angler Jim Nashed enjoys this section of the river best. "I've been across this country, to Montana, Wyoming, Alaska, but few trips compare to a day I had on the North Branch of the Potomac River," he says. "I found success with every possible technique—from dry flies to nymphs to swinging streamers. It's almost difficult *not* to have great success here." He boasts of the number, size and health, noting, "Ev-



Neil Jacobs with a trophy rainbow trout



Rick Morgan (front) and his son Bryan with a rainbow trout

ery fish we caught was a healthy, chunky specimen full of vigor!"

Full of life, the fishery is a testament to solid management of water flows and fingerling stockings.

"These efforts are paying off," Nashed adds. "Continued efforts should keep the vitality of the river going for years. With a fishery this amazing so close to home, I hardly see a reason to venture to the western states very often."

It truly is a one-of-a-kind fishing experience right here in Maryland. Your adventure awaits! ■

[dnr.maryland.gov/fisheries](http://dnr.maryland.gov/fisheries)

**Alan Klotz** is the Western Region Inland Fisheries manager.

#### KNOW BEFORE YOU GO

- The river is large and the best flows to float-fish safely are about 300 cubic foot per second.
- A Maryland Non-Tidal Sport Fishing License is required to float-fish, and a Trout Stamp is needed in catch-and-return areas.
- Both spin and fly fishing tackle are permitted on all North Branch Potomac River Trout Fishing Areas. Most fishing guide services provide fishing equipment.
- Fishing is open year-round. Best fishing is from late spring through fall.
- Consult the Maryland Fishing Guide for complete regulations at [eregulations.com/Maryland/fishing](http://eregulations.com/Maryland/fishing).
- Call the Western Region Inland Fisheries Office with any questions at 301-334-8218.

#### FISHING GUIDE SERVICES

Boulder-strewn rapids and small waterfalls occur throughout, so it is advised that an experienced guide take you down the river for the first time. Guides offer both half day and full day float wading trips. Let any of the outfitters below teach you how to navigate and locate the best trout holding locations!

**Eastern Trophies Fly Fishing** [easterntrophies.com](http://easterntrophies.com) 571-213-2570

**North Branch Angler** [kenpavol@gmail.com](mailto:kenpavol@gmail.com) 240-321-1495

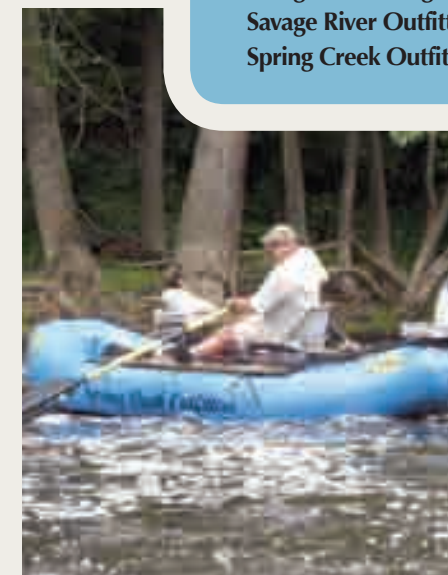
**Sang Run Outfitters** [sangrunoutfitters.com](http://sangrunoutfitters.com) 301-616-3814

**Savage River Angler, LLC** [saveriverangler.com](http://saveriverangler.com) 703-999-8504

**Savage River Lodge** [saveriverlodge.com](http://saveriverlodge.com) 301-689-3200

**Savage River Outfitters** [saveriveroutfitters.com](http://saveriveroutfitters.com) 703-517-1040

**Spring Creek Outfitters** [springcreekoutfitter.com](http://springcreekoutfitter.com) 301-387-6587



Spring Creek Outfitters

#### BAIT TIPS

- Aquatic insect hatches are prolific, as mayflies, stoneflies and caddisflies are found in abundance.
- Terrestrial patterns such as beetles, ants and inchworms produce good dry fly action during the summer.
- Larger brown trout and rainbow trout are frequently caught on large streamers as well as artificial minnow and crayfish lures.





Adult coyote

MATT KNOTH



Adult coyote

STEVE THOMPSON



Pup hunting vole

TOM KOENNER

# COYOTES IN MARYLAND

*Where they came from and what to expect*

By Harry Spiker

No, coyotes didn't ride into the state at the hand of insurance companies looking to thin out the deer herd to reduce deer-vehicle collisions. And no, wildlife management agencies didn't stock them across the state.

These are two funny but common myths surrounding the arrival of these highly adaptable mid-sized canines in Maryland.

## An expanding range

While humans may have been indirectly responsible for their migration, these wily animals expanded on their own without any direct assistance.

Coyotes were originally a mid-western species that occupied the prairies, west of the Mississippi River and east of the Rocky

Mountains. They were confined to the Great Plains largely due to the absence of two larger predators in that area—mountain lions and wolves. As humans developed the east coast, wolves and mountain lions eventually became *extirpated*, or removed from that portion of their range.

Human settlers also cleared eastern forests for agriculture, shipbuilding and other industries. This change in the landscape created a better setting for coyotes—more field and edge habitats similar to what they had been accustomed to in the Midwest.

With less competition and a friendlier landscape, coyotes began to expand their range in the early 1900s, following two major courses: a northern route that led out of

the plains through Canada, around the Great Lakes, into New England and then south, and a southern route that went across the Mississippi River, through the southeastern states and then north.

Maryland and Delaware were the last two states in the east to be inhabited by coyotes, since the northern and southern expansion routes met here. They can now be found nationwide and throughout most of Canada and Central America.

The first reported Maryland sightings came in 1972 in Cecil, Frederick and Washington counties. Though they were slow to establish a breeding population, they now inhabit all counties, with higher numbers in the western part of the state.

## Adaptations and sightings

True generalists, coyotes thrive in a variety of different conditions and terrains, including forests, open fields, tidal wetlands and the greenways that surround many suburban communities. It appears they have been utilizing these spaces for decades, though they typically avoid being seen.

Wildlife biologists in Maryland monitor the population primarily through harvest reporting and surveys. Results reveal that sightings are relatively low. Both of the species' canine cousins—the gray fox and

the red fox—are observed much more frequently. While observation rates drop significantly from west to east, coyote sightings are reported statewide, suggesting they inhabit areas in every county.

## Traits and characteristics

Coyotes are the largest wild canines in the state, and they tend to be larger than their western cousins. Most weigh between 30-40 pounds, though they can reach over 60 pounds. They have large, erect ears and notably pointed muzzles with close-set eyes.

They are approximately 18-24 inches high at the shoulder, and they have bushy, black-tipped tails. Their typical coloration, somewhat resembling that of German Shepherds, is brown or buff interspersed with mottled gray or black. Eastern coyotes are also more likely to be seen with some non-typical coloration, such as black, reddish or even blonde fur.

One possible explanation for the bigger size and non-typical color variations stems from the northern migration route. Some researchers—backed by scientific evidence—believe these coyotes bred with wolves as the species expanded eastward.

Coyotes are omnivores, meaning they eat both plants and animals. They are opportunistic, eating whatever may be available. This includes plant and vegetable matter, insects, carrion and small mammals such as rodents, rabbits and birds.

They have also been known to take deer—primarily fawns during the first few weeks of life when they are more vulnerable. Once fawns reach about six months of age, however, they are much more mobile and less susceptible to predation.

The coyote-deer dynamic is one that has been subject to scrutiny in recent years, and

therefore has been increasingly researched throughout North America. Recent studies suggest that while coyotes could potentially depress a vulnerable deer population, that is not the case here in the mid-Appalachian region. Deer have evolved with predators throughout time and are ecologically suited to survive alongside Maryland's newest resident predator.

## Territory and human interaction

Coyotes employ several different social strategies. Some may live by themselves while others can be found in social groups. They may even switch strategies occasionally, choosing to live with other coyotes only at specific times. They tend to have large home ranges, covering several square miles, which they actively defend from unwelcome visitors and intruders alike.

Coyotes adeptly travel the landscape undetected. They learn quickly that getting too close to people could lead to their demise. Recent research demonstrates relatively high mortality rates caused by vehicle collisions and hunting. Despite this, however, populations continue to increase and expand.

At the Department of Natural Resources, we have learned that when there is a conflict, such as a coyote attack on pets or livestock, it is usually the result of an individual or group of coyotes that has lost its fear of people. Once removed, the issues tend to go away, even if other coyotes are still known to be in the area.

State law allows landowners to trap or hunt a coyote that is damaging or destroying personal or real property on their land. Additionally, technical assistance is available to residents who have experienced a conflict by calling the nuisance wildlife information line at 877-463-6497.

We have been sharing our landscape with these animals for decades with relatively few reported conflicts or confrontations—on average, less than one per year. It is our hope that we will continue to successfully coexist with these highly adaptable canines well into the future. ■

[dnr.maryland.gov/wildlife](http://dnr.maryland.gov/wildlife)

**Harry Spiker** is the game mammal section leader with the Wildlife & Heritage Service.

*While the population increase is likely to continue,* there is little cause for concern. Coyotes will likely continue to go unnoticed by most residents, just as they have for the last few decades. Here are some common sense steps to reduce the possibility for conflict:

- Remember, coyotes are wild animals—respect them and give them plenty of space.
- Don't try to approach or feed them.
- Don't leave food out where they can access it, as this only increases the chance they lose their natural fear of people.
- Feed pets or livestock inside homes or barns. If you must feed outside, provide only enough food for one meal at a time so there are no leftovers to attract unwanted guests.



# SANDY POINT STATE PARK

*The fastest-growing town in Maryland* By Candy Thomson



A popular swimming spot

The sky is just beginning to wake up when the line begins forming.

In the time it takes the horizon to go from inky black to soft blues and pinks, cars multiply and snake from the entrance of Sandy Point back toward the U.S. Route 50 exit ramp.

Everyone, it seems, wants to be a citizen of the state's fastest-growing town, a community that goes from zero to 10,000 residents each summertime Saturday and Sunday in a matter of hours.

Sandy Point isn't the state's oldest park. That honor goes to Patapsco Valley. It isn't the largest. That title belongs to Gunpowder Falls. The popularity of Sandy Point is measured instead by attendance.

Last year, it exceeded one million visitors—the only Maryland state park besides Assateague ever to hit that mark.

It used to be that Sandy Point reached capacity only on the three major holiday weekends: Memorial Day, Independence Day and Labor Day. But last year, it filled every, single weekend.

## What's the attraction

"It's the gateway to the Chesapeake Bay, the last stop before you get to the Eastern Shore," park manager Steve McCoy explains.

If Sandy Point were a real town, McCoy would be its mayor, with all the challenges and rewards that come with the territory.

"We have all the same issues as a city: public safety, crowd control, traffic and parking issues," McCoy says.

Sandy Point has the state's busiest public marina and boat ramps. It has 10 miles of natural sidewalks that lead to marshes and woodlands. It has a small store. It even has a law enforcement agency in the form of the Natural Resources Police.

The "chief," Acting Lt. Aaron Parker, is a 20-year veteran of the department and has been at Sandy Point since 2003. The growth of the park in that time "has been amazing," he says.

## Keeping order

Parker guides a small contingent of officers who patrol not only the park and marina, but also the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries from northern Anne Arundel County to Breezy Point in Calvert County.

For four of his officers, 2016 is their first summer at Sandy Point.

"It's definitely a small town, people everywhere," says Parker, leaning back in his chair. "We can tell new officers. We can show them pictures. But it's not the same.



A seagull amongst the crowd

They have to experience it. I've had officers overwhelmed."

Parker and McCoy meet frequently to stay on top of the challenges. One of the biggest is getting people safely inside the 786-acre tract.

When the park reaches capacity—dictated by the 1,500 parking spaces—managers shut the gate and put out the word on social media, the park web page and on electronic message boards beyond the



A busy day on the beach



Anglers looking to enjoy a day of fishing

park's boundaries. Managers don't wave new park goers in until 150 to 200 parking spaces open up. On a busy summer weekend, that can take up to four hours.

"We're all about customer service. We don't want to close more than once a day and disappoint people, so we don't rush to reopen," McCoy says.

Parker and McCoy work with other agencies, such as the State Highway Administration, the Maryland Transportation Authority and State Police, to keep waiting traffic from clogging U.S. 50 or filling nearby neighborhood streets.

"Still, you might get a guy pull out a portable grill and make some food while he's waiting," Parker says, laughing. "We try and discourage that."

## Park roots

The park officially opened on June 25, 1952 at the site of a pier for the Chesapeake Bay Ferry System. But the area—with few amenities—was in use two years earlier, documents show.

With little development in 1950, the attendance was already an estimated 75,000 persons, the state planning commission reported to then-Governor Theodore McKeldin and the General Assembly.

The Master Plan for State Parks urged spending \$1.7 million for swimming pools and 30,000 lockers, two cafeterias, parking lots and roads.

Even without the fancy extras, families found plenty to like: sandy beaches bathhouses, and areas to crab and fish. And early park goers could marvel at the newly constructed two-lane Bay Bridge, which opened in July 1952 and made the ferry obsolete.

However, as with many public accommodations of its time, Sandy Point welcomed only white patrons despite a regional African American population of about 64 percent.

In 1955, the barrier was removed at Sandy Point, Fort Smallwood Municipal Park Beach and Baltimore City swimming pools by a U.S. Supreme Court decision.

By July 1978, Sandy Point was attracting 126,000 visitors annually.

## Sandy Point in the 21st Century

Ironically, the very diversity lacking in Sandy Point's beginnings is what powers it today. A survey of 1,000 patrons conducted last year shows that on summer weekends 82 percent are Hispanic, and for the vast majority, Spanish is their first language.

The Town of Sandy Point embraces its newest residents. Park rules are spelled out in Spanish, some park staff members are bilingual and police officers know Spanish phrases common in their line of work.

"We have been very fortunate," Parker says. "People are good about obeying the rules. They comply."

McCoy adds, "Everyone comes here for the same reasons—to enjoy the bay, enjoy the park and enjoy time with family and friends."

These families might include grandparents, cousins, aunts and uncles who come early and grill breakfast, lunch and dinner.

The changing park demographic pattern has triggered another municipal function: long-term planning.

"The big thing we're grappling with right now is finding the tipping point. How often can we have 8,000 to 10,000 people in the park—wall-to-wall people and not see long-term harm?" McCoy asks. "The answer isn't paving and developing more land."

Managers at six state parks with the highest volume of visitors are examining some of those use issues now.

McCoy also wants to take a "holistic" approach to the integration of recreation areas with natural areas, with an emphasis on planting more native grasses and trees while eradicating invasive plants.

The challenges of a small-town mayor can be daunting, but the perks of the job are pretty good, too.

"What I love is walking around the park at lunchtime, smelling all the different foods and hearing different kinds of music," McCoy says, smiling. "We do become a small town." ■

[dnr.maryland.gov/publiclands](http://dnr.maryland.gov/publiclands)

Candy Thomson is the Natural Resources Police public information officer.





# ON DUTY

## STATE PARK LIFEGUARDS

By Ranger Alison Woodfield

### Water water everywhere

A premier spot for bay swimming and waterfront picnics, Sandy Point employs twenty lifeguards to monitor 1,600 feet of very busy beachfront.

Keeping a watchful eye over their areas, they rescue swimmers, assist boaters in distress and help locate lost children. In 2015 alone, Sandy Point lifeguards reunited over 120 children with their parents!

Although lifeguards can expect similar experiences statewide, each park offers unique features and opportunities.

New Germany staff stay busy guarding their 13-acre lake as well as managing the heated pool at Dan's Mountain, which overlooks the town of Lonaconing.

Rocky Gap and Point Lookout offer pet-friendly beaches in addition to their other waterfront amenities. With that, lifeguards at Rocky Gap have not only rescued people from the 243-acre Lake Habeeb, but dogs in distress as well.

Guarding the only oceanfront park in Maryland, staff at Assateague deal with the challenges of rip currents and—of course—the wild ponies roaming the beach.

### On the job

Millions of visitors mean many challenges. Lifeguards undergo rigorous training—with a major emphasis on medical emergencies so they are prepared for a myriad of potential incidents—and continue physical training throughout the season.

Three-year veteran lifeguard, Tyler Walker, describes the sense of camaraderie he feels each summer with his team: "We have such a good trust in each other that makes for a great and fun working environment. This in turn gives me confidence when responding to emergencies because I know we have each other's backs."

Between watching over the beach and manning the first aid stations, some lifeguards spend their days roving the park's other areas, often taking time to educate visitors about the aquatic environment. Many of the waterfront parks also offer programs to enhance public knowledge of water safety through activities. ■

[dnr.maryland.gov/publiclands](http://dnr.maryland.gov/publiclands)

Ranger Alison Woodfield is the customer service manager with the Maryland Park Service.



The pool at Dan's Mountain



The lake at Greenbrier

### WHAT IT TAKES

In order to be qualified and considered for a lifeguarding position, individuals must successfully pass a swim test and a written exam, as well as maintain the following certifications from nationally recognized agencies:

- CPR for adults, children and infants, including the use of an Automated External Defibrillator
- First Aid
- Lifeguarding

Available lifeguard positions are posted at [jobaps.com/md](http://jobaps.com/md).



The beach at Assateague

### COMPETITION

Any Maryland Park Service lifeguard will say the highlight of the summer is getting to attend the annual Lifeguard Competition.

After an intense season, waterfront parks send their best to vie for bragging rights and the ultimate prize, the competition trophy.

They race to complete simulated rescues, relay beach flags and put their endurance to the test in the iron guard swim-run-paddle event.

Each round is carefully judged and both individuals as well as teams are recognized for their talents.

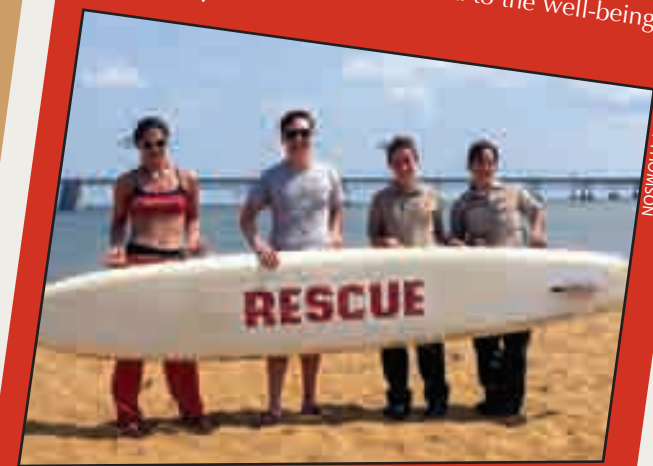


Two guards competing

### SAFETY TIPS

To help our lifeguards this summer, please follow these simple steps to ensure the safety of you and your family and friends:

- Swim in designated areas supervised by lifeguards.
- Never swim alone; always swim with a buddy.
- Teach children to always ask permission to go near/in water.
- Have young children/inexperienced swimmers wear a U.S. Coast Guard approved life jacket.
- Maintain constant supervision and avoid any distractions.
- If a child is missing, check the water first and then alert a lifeguard.
- Wear sunscreen.
- Drink plenty of water.



Guards Isela Hernandez, Nathan Cmiel and Rangers Maria Reusing, Alison Woodfield

## A DAY IN THE LIFE...

You never know when all that training will be the difference between life and death. Early last June, I witnessed it firsthand.

As severe storms rocked the shores of the Chesapeake Bay, a group of off-duty park lifeguards and rangers joined Natural Resources Police officers to aid in an overturned jet ski rescue off Sandy Point.

It all started when a young boy ran to us, pointing toward the water and saying a man was yelling for help. The lifeguards and Ranger Maria Reusing ran down East Beach to the water. Meanwhile, I alerted Sgt. James Johnson, who jumped on a patrol boat and called for backup.

With the skies darkening and the winds churning up whitecaps, lifeguard Nathan Cmiel swam toward 17-year-old Oscar Alas, closely followed by lifeguard Isela Hernandez. Reusing went in behind the two of them to relay information to shore.

They didn't hesitate. There wasn't a bit of fear in their eyes.

Alas told rescuers that there were four others—his parents, 8-year-old brother and 18-year-old friend—well beyond the swimming area. All five of them, luckily, were wearing life jackets.

While lifeguards brought Alas to shore and assessed his condition, Sgt. Donald Mackall and Officer Kristen McFarland stood on the beach and directed Sgt. Johnson to the location of the nearly submerged jet skis and four bobbing heads barely peeking above the waterline.

After towing the disabled jet skis to shore, Johnson and Mackall raced off in response to another distress call. The storm was coming in so quickly; we could barely see their blue lights return with another family of four. After some minor treatment, all members of both parties were safe and accounted for.

While most days are more calm, these are the circumstances for which our staff train. They're prepared, they're skilled and they're dedicated to the well-being of all guests.

### MARYLAND STATE PARKS WITH WATER ACCESS

Assateague	Hart-Miller Island
Cunningham Falls	Herrington Manor
Dan's Mountain	Janes Island
Deep Creek Lake	New Germany
Elk Neck	Pocomoke River
Greenbrier	Point Lookout
Greenwell	Rocky Gap
Gunpowder Falls	Sandy Point





CANDY THOMSON

# CALLING FOR HELP

*A profile on emergency dispatchers*

By Shakira Johnson

**EMERGENCY HOTLINE 410-260-8888**

## Scope and vigilance

The staff handles calls not only for the police but also for department units, from forests and parks to fisheries and wildlife. Last year, the center processed approximately 38,000 calls.

The dispatchers are at the center of the action for conservation as well as traditional law enforcement calls.

"You could go from taking a call about a sick animal one minute to checking someone's fishing license the next, to suddenly getting a call for a boating accident, where people's lives depend on how fast you react to the situation and carry out your duties to get the help they need," says Leonard Mathesius II, an eight-year veteran behind the console.

## Answering the call

Officer First Class Amelia Nelson is comforted knowing that a dispatcher is always at the other end of the call.

"I was responding to a vessel in distress in the middle of a thunderstorm," she recalls of the run that took her across the bay. "Dispatch was aware of the weather and the sea conditions and was constantly in touch with me to make sure I was okay. They even asked me to let them know when I returned from my patrol boat safe and sound."

The job of a dispatcher is both rewarding and challenging. Dispatchers are tethered to their workstations with very limited breaks. They work rotating shifts, including weekends and holidays, often sacrificing time with their families.

## Life-saving efforts

Newcomer Beth Coleman, with the agency for 15 months, says, "It's a job that I look

forward to go to every day. You never know what you're going to encounter, from the smallest things to saving someone's life... it's all in a day's work."

Recently Coleman received a call about an empty car with the motor running in a state park. A motor vehicle check returned only a company name for the license plate. Coleman's tenacity and dedication paid off as she searched several databases to link the vehicle to a missing suicidal woman. Officers on the scene stepped up their search, found the woman and rescued her from the water.

"I look forward to the challenge and going above and beyond what you have to do," says Coleman, "always hoping for a good outcome."

## True teamwork

While dispatching has its highs and lows, there is no denying that it is a vital and essential part of the overall mission. Dispatchers are the lifeline to the public they serve and to the officers in the field.

"Often in stressful situations, I have requested something from the dispatch center only to be told that in their diligence, the dispatcher has already taken care of it," says Master Officer Norris Shannon. "That's teamwork, and we couldn't do the job without them."

Mathesius sums up life in the dispatch center: "I think the best thing that I take away from this career—that beats absolutely anything that someone could give me—is knowing just how great an impact we make on someone's life." ■

[dnr.maryland.gov/nrp](http://dnr.maryland.gov/nrp)

**Shakira Johnson** is a communications trainer with the Natural Resources Police.



CANDY THOMSON

By Candy Thomson

Barely rising above the waterline in Isle of Wight Bay is, perhaps, the last hope for some of Maryland's beach-nesting birds.

A small, four-acre disk of sand, about a half mile west of Ocean City, is where scientists and bird lovers hope black skimmers, royal terns and common terns will come each spring to breed and replenish their badly depleted numbers.

Tern Island, still too new to appear on maps, was built last year by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in collaboration with the Maryland Coastal Bays Program and numerous agencies as a sanctuary for these endangered flyers.

## Addressing the need

Simply put, the future of these birds depends on undisturbed, isolated islands and the protection they provide from predators, such as foxes and raccoons. The bays behind Ocean City and Assateague are some of the few remaining places in the state these birds can breed.

But erosion and rising water have eaten away at coastal bay islands "at an alarming rate," says David Brinker, an ecologist with the Department of Natural Resources.

In the past quarter century, more than 300 acres of islands have disappeared.

Only three of the seabirds' original 29 islands remain for breeding and nesting.

As a result, the black skimmer population in the coastal bays has declined from 87 pairs to just six pairs since 2000. Common terns have declined 86 percent, and royal terns have declined by 60 percent since the early 1990s. All three species are now listed as endangered in Maryland.

## Island creation

To reverse this decline, the Maryland Departments of the Environment and Natural Resources, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and other partners drew up a plan to use dredge material from shipping channel maintenance and other projects to restore the nesting islands.

A 2011 restoration project near Ocean City and Assateague proved successful in attracting not only royal terns and skimmers, but also American oystercatchers and least terns.

However, when erosion continued to nibble away at even these rebuilt islands, project partners decided to build an entirely new island for seabirds in a more remote location, large enough to withstand the pounding of currents and storms.

The resulting work—begun in 2014—created Tern Island, now part of the Sinepuxent Bay Wildlife Management Area.

## Proper use

The timing of completion, however, meant that Tern Island was not posted before the start of summer. The beach meant for birds became a magnet for boaters whose activities scared birds off their nests and attracted avian predators such as seagulls and crows.

This year is a different story. The Department of Natural Resources has placed signs along the shoreline, closing Tern Island along with Heron, OC Spoils and Skimmer (Bird) islands from April 1 to Sept. 15, when birds are nesting. Staff will monitor the islands and Natural Resources Police will enforce the restrictions.

With the help of Audubon Maryland-DC and the Assateague Coastal Trust, an outreach campaign has been created to educate the public about the importance of colonial nesting birds. That message has been turned into posters by children in the Trust's Coast Kids program that will be posted around Ocean City for millions of visitors to see this summer.

With cooperation from the public, Tern Island truly will be *for* the birds. ■

[dnr.maryland.gov/nrp](http://dnr.maryland.gov/nrp)

**Candy Thomson** is the Natural Resources Police public information officer.



KENT CARLSON

Royal terns

**DID YOU KNOW?** The Maryland Natural Resources Police is the state's oldest law enforcement agency. These officers have the same authority as state troopers and additionally handle law enforcement on state lands and water.





FORT SMALLWOOD  
ANNE ARUNDEL COUNTY



After



OAK CREEK  
TALBOT COUNTY

Before

After

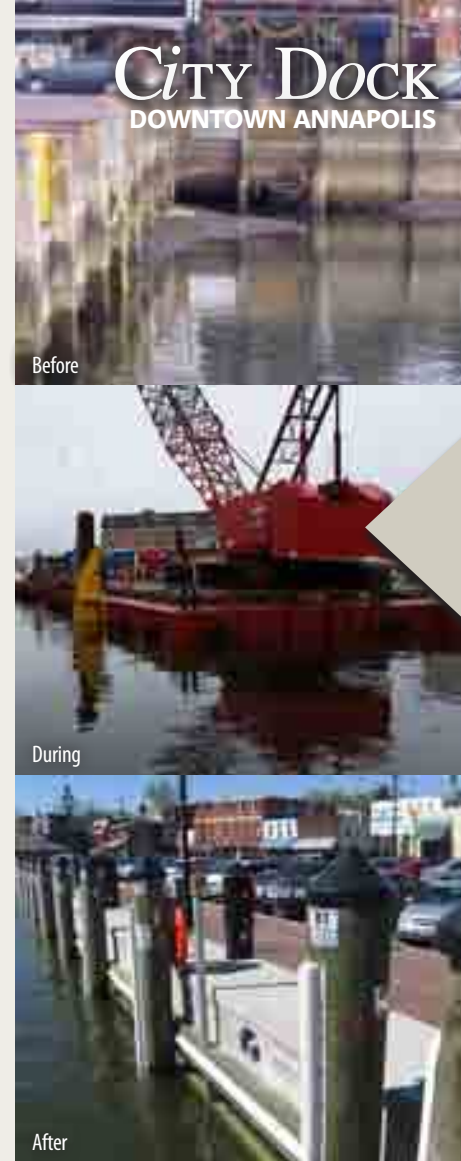


FIFTEEN MILE CREEK  
ALLEGANY COUNTY

Before

After

Aerial after



CITY DOCK  
DOWNTOWN ANNAPOLIS

Before

During

After

DEPARTMENT PHOTOS

## BETTER BOATING FOR ALL

### GRANT-FUNDED PROJECTS

## PARTNERSHIPS SUPPORTING RECREATION ON THE WATER

By Don O'Neill

Maryland boasts a rich maritime history, a vast array of freshwater and saltwater venues and an enthusiastic constituency of recreational boaters who have more than 180,000 recreational vessels. Standing by to serve citizens and visitors alike are more than 600 marinas and 500 public boat ramps and launches.

### Boosting the economy

Recreational boating is not only good for the spirit but also is a boon to Maryland's economy. It supports more than 13,000 jobs and adds \$2.4 billion annually to the economy, according to the National Marine Manufacturers Association.

The lifeblood of the Department of Natural Resources Boating Services' efforts is the Waterway Improvement Fund—the five-percent vessel excise tax paid when a boat is registered and titled in Maryland.

Since its inception in 1966, the fund has provided more than \$300 million for 4,500 projects at more than 300 public boating access sites. The fund also supports services such as ice breaking and navigation aids, as well as the management of the Clean Marina Initiative.

In fiscal year 2017, nearly every county will receive a portion of the \$10.5 million allocated for the improvement fund. Governor Larry Hogan and the General Assembly approved 60 projects, including dredging local navigation channels, developing and maintaining public boating access facilities, installing marine sewage pumpout facilities, and purchasing safety and rescue vessels. Funds can also be used to leverage federal grants for various boating projects.

### A history of success

The *Clean Marina Initiative* began in 1997 as a collaboration with the Marine Trades Association of Maryland. This voluntary program provides incentives for marinas to embrace best management practices for pollution reduction. To date, 131 Maryland marinas have become certified through the program and 24 other facilities have become Clean Marina partners.

The Marine Sewage Pumpout Grant Program is one of the most successful such initiatives in the nation. More than half of the 600 marinas statewide have used federal Clean Vessel Act and state Waterway Improvement funding to purchase and install pumpout facilities.

Together, these marinas properly dispose of approximately two million gallons of boat sewage each year, helping clean up Maryland waterways. Many of these marinas receive additional money to help pay for operation and maintenance costs.

*Boating Infrastructure Grant* funds have supported 15 projects throughout the state. Notable projects include renovations of the Annapolis City Dock, the Baltimore Inner Harbor Marine Center and the Oxford Town Dock.

These projects help ensure that the owners of larger recreational transient vessels may enjoy the cultural and historic opportunities that help make Maryland one of the premier boating destinations in the world.

*Boating Access* funds, matched by Waterway Improvement and local funds, have supported the renovation and construction of 33 boat ramps from the Atlantic Ocean



Pumpout facility

DEPARTMENT PHOTO

to the upper Potomac River. Three of these projects—West Ocean City Harbor, Franklin Street in Cambridge and Talbot County's Oak Creek Landing—received the States Organization for Boating Access Outstanding Project Award.

Most recently, Boating Access funds were used for the renovation of Broad Creek Landing in Harford County and the Coulbourn Creek ramp in Somerset County.

Additionally, in one of the most significant local projects of its kind, these funds covered \$1.3 million of the approximately \$2 million Fort Smallwood Park Boat Ramp, the first ramp owned and operated by Anne Arundel County.

### The bottom line

When the federal, state and local governments work together with a supportive marine trades industry, good things happen. The department is pleased to be a part of that mix. ■

[dnr.maryland.gov/boating](http://dnr.maryland.gov/boating)

Don O'Neill is a federal grant management specialist with Boating Services.



### DID YOU KNOW?

The department receives a big financial boost from the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service through the federal Sport Fish Restoration Fund.

A portion supports three recreational boating programs by providing funding for up to 75 percent of eligible project costs:

**Clean Vessel Act:** Aids with the cost of marinas purchasing, installing and maintaining pumpout facilities.

**Boating Infrastructure Grant:** Supports the cost of constructing tie-up facilities for recreational transient vessels 26-feet long or greater.

**Boating Access:** Provides grants for constructing and renovating publicly owned boat ramps.



# BIRDS WITHOUT BORDERS

## Continental bird conservation

By Dr. Judith Scarl



Canada geese  
CHUCK PRAHL

One hundred years ago, North America united for the birds.

This August marks the 100th anniversary of the first Migratory Bird Treaty. This groundbreaking international agreement between the United States and Canada was our country's first international commitment to protect natural resources across political boundaries. This milestone set the stage for continent-wide cooperative protection of migratory birds.

### Continental unity, then and now

Twenty years later in 1936, with his country in the aftermath of revolution, Mexican president Lázaro Cárdenas committed his country to a treaty with the U.S. protecting birds and other wildlife, connecting all of North America in its protection efforts.

Even during times of tremendous economic and political instability, our three nations recognized the importance of migratory bird conservation and united to protect our shared species.

In this centennial year, celebrating our earliest efforts towards international migratory bird protection, we are uniting once again with a *State of North America's Birds* report—a groundbreaking collaboration

to evaluate the bird populations in 9 key ecosystems across the continent. Developed by the U.S. North American Bird Conservation Initiative and built using data collected by tens of thousands of citizen scientists, this report is a call to action to governments, private industry and the public to come together to support a beloved resource: our migratory birds. This unprecedented, continent-wide analysis demonstrates the power of people to understanding conservation needs—and to make conservation happen.

### Keeping close watch

Of the 1,154 types of birds that occur in North America, one third are on the report's Watch List, which identifies high-risk species. In particular, the birds that depend on oceans and tropical forests are most imperiled due to habitat threats, restricted ranges and declining populations.

More than half of our seabirds are listed. They are threatened by pollution, over-

fishing, energy extraction, climate change and invasive species that depredate nests.

More than 50 boreal breeding bird species—those coming from the southern Arctic region—migrate to and through Mexico's tropical forests for winter. But while 80 percent of the boreal forest in Canada and the northern United States is still intact, tropical forests in Mexico suffer from dramatic deforestation, resulting in more than 70 percent habitat loss since the 1970s and landing more than half of Mexican tropical forest resident bird species on the Watch List.

Birds connect our continent, meaning that deforestation in Mexico threaten species across North America. Several species of concern, such as wood thrush and

Louisiana water thrush, for instance, breed in Maryland's forests but winter in Mexico and Central America.

Grassland birds are facing some of the steepest population declines of any group, landing many such species on the Watch List. The vast majority of the pre-settlement prairie has been converted to agricultural and residential areas. As a result, grassland birds cling to fragmented remnants of their original habitats.

In Maryland, grassland birds take advantage of surrogate habitats created on reclaimed strip mines, as well as habitats created specifically for them through voluntary private landowner participation in the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program.

Through this federal-state partnership, participants receive land rental income in exchange for taking environmentally sensitive cropland out of production for 10 to 15 years. During that time period, they instead create wildlife habitat, establish wetlands, protect highly erodible lands or plant streamside buffers.

### Conservation efforts

In spite of such alarming trends, we know that when people push for positive change, bird conservation succeeds. One hundred years ago, passionate wildlife supporters encouraged national leaders to invest in bird conservation by signing the Migratory Bird Treaty and putting an end to market hunting.

Investments in wetlands have paid off too; the 1934 Duck Stamp Act reflected commitments by hunters to protect waterfowl habitat—a key accomplishment that has created a strong and positive outlook for ducks, herons, egrets and many others.

In the 1980s, the passage of the North American Wetlands Conservation Act secured funding to conserve wetland and upland habitat continent-wide. Over the past two decades, it has provided \$1.4 billion in grants, which acted as a catalyst for generating \$2.9 billion in partner funds for projects on 30 million acres of habitat in all three countries. In Maryland, this funding protected and enhanced more than 87,000 acres.

Just as waterfowl migrate between Canada and Mexico and back again, conservation must be guided by the birds rather than borders.

## ONE-THIRD OF ALL NORTH AMERICAN BIRD SPECIES NEED URGENT CONSERVATION ACTION



Hen mallard



Lesser yellowlegs



Osprey

### Call to action

As we celebrate the 100th anniversary of the first Migratory Bird Treaty, birds once again need our help. Fortunately, there are many ways to support strong populations.

Businesses can emerge as sustainability leaders, making healthy lands and waters part of their long-term growth strategies. Federal, state and local governments can guide policy, supporting strong conservation practices. Even our individual actions can have far-reaching positive impacts.

Simple acts like choosing sustainably created products, preventing bird collisions

[dnr.maryland.gov/wildlife](http://dnr.maryland.gov/wildlife)

Judith Scarl, Ph.D. is the U.S. Coordinator of the North American Bird Conservation Initiative, as well as the Bird Conservation Program Manager for the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies. Gwen Brewer, Ph.D.—Wildlife & Heritage science program manager—contributed to this article.





Cattail Creek 24 hours after a storm



Sediment in the creek



Kevin Smith and Marion Clement at fish passage structure

# TAKING ACTION at Cattail Creek

## A community effort to restore a stream

By Claudia Donegan

The Magothy River has long been cherished by the communities in its watershed: Arnold, Broadneck, Pasadena and Severna Park. While the commitment to local stewardship continues to grow, one community is making waves to improve its local stream.

The stream is Cattail Creek and the community is Berrywood of Severna Park.

Despite centuries of altering the landscape, a few places still retain their natural beauty and form. The Cattail Creek Natural Area, just west of Ritchie Highway, is one such place. It is an example of an important ecological landmark in a highly urbanized area.

This green oasis got Kevin Smith, who leads aquatic restoration projects with the Department of Natural Resources, thinking. "Can we replicate this kind of habitat elsewhere in the watershed?" he asks. "With the engagement of the Berrywood community—willing to put in the time, energy and hard work to make it happen—I believe we can."

### A community's voice

It all started about a year ago at *Spring Into Action*, the Anne Arundel County Watershed Stewards Academy's annual conference. Department staff listened as Molly LaChapelle spun a compelling story.

A Minnesota native, LaChapelle moved to Maryland in 1971 for graduate studies at Johns Hopkins University. Berrywood became her home.

As both school teacher and administrator, she spent 35 years challenging her students to appreciate and learn from the environment, capping her career by earning St. John the Evangelist School the esteemed Green School title from the Maryland Association for Environmental and Outdoor Education.

"Cattail Creek," she said at the conference, "is part of the fabric of our entire neighborhood."

She recalled her sons fishing the creek for soft crabs and exploring the banks for frogs, and then watched in dismay as trees were cleared to make room for growth. Results were predictable. Runoff deteriorated the watershed.

"The water used to be clear in the winter as soft bottom sediment would drop out before the tidal area near our house," she noted. "That no longer occurs."

Such changes motivated her to join the Berrywood civic and watershed committees. LaChapelle testified in Annapolis to protect the area and worked with the State Highway Administration to replace failing culverts. The day the work began, the

community was pounded by the rainstorm of a lifetime.

"Cattail Creek was totally exposed," she said. "The rushing water looked more like the Colorado River than our little creek."

LaChapelle's story took a positive turn as she told the staff about the Berrywood Homeowner Association and its determination to help Cattail Creek by improving habitat for aquatic wildlife and recreational access for the neighborhood's residents.

"I now have grandchildren in Berrywood," she said. "I just want to take back the creek my sons enjoyed."

Since LaChapelle shared her story, the community has embraced an ambitious restoration project.

### Engaged partners

Citizens and government forged a partnership to enhance the creek following several association meetings and site visits by natural resource and county restoration experts.

This spring, the community received a \$2,500 grant from the Chesapeake Bay Trust to eliminate invasive plants along the streamside forest area. With professional help, volunteers removed close to 5,000 feet of English ivy, multiflora rose and other aggressive growth along the bank. Furthermore, the community has put together a long-term vegetation management plan



Berrywood residents and project staff left to right: Bob Lennox, Bob Royer, Andrea Germain, Jon Hartley, Suzanne Etgen, Molly LaChapelle, Marion Clement



LaChapelle discussing the project with Etgen and Hartley

to protect the riparian buffer from additional invasive plants.

The Magothy River Association pitched in too, providing expertise and recruiting Anne Arundel Community College students participating in a program called Operation Clearwater to measure nutrient reduction downstream.

Led by Paul Spadaro, the association created community oyster nurseries, floating gardens and a program to monitor bay grasses. "I'm hopeful our efforts will improve fish passage and expand fish-spawning habitat deep in the wetlands," he said with enthusiasm.

### A masterful steward

What makes this continuing effort special is not only Berrywood's relationship with its stream, but also its connection to the

## Watershed Stewards Academy

Through a partnership with the University of Maryland SeaGrant Extension and with support from the Department of Natural Resources, the academy has served as a model for the development of several successful programs in other areas, including Cecil and Howard counties, the National Capital Region (Montgomery, Prince George's counties and Washington D.C.) and most recently, St. Mary's County. Each program adheres to a specific structure and follows a core curriculum while adding topics to meet specific regional needs.

In 2015, stewards led their communities to...

- plant 2,700 native trees and plants.
- install 130 rain barrels and cisterns.
- complete 350 projects covering an area the size of 3.5 football fields.
- remove 350,500 square feet of invasive plants.

Watershed Stewards Academy. To better serve as the catalyst of the Cattail Creek project, LaChapelle became a Master Watershed Steward by completing more than 600 hours of field and classroom training. This certification, paid for by members of her community, has provided her the skills and resources to propel restoration.

The academy has rallied communities from Brooklyn Park to Herring Bay by preparing more than 160 certified stewards to lead their own communities to action for cleaner water.

"It's exciting," LaChapelle said. "We're working together to make sure we have a healthy creek for fish and wildlife, a healthy contributor to the Magothy River, and ultimately, the Chesapeake Bay."

### Happening now

Success for a project like this can be measured in a number of ways. Smith explains, "Our basic goal is to improve ecological function. Are the storm flows being dampened and spread out over a larger floodplain area? Are the wetlands and waterfront areas vegetated with the appropriate native plants? Are fish and aquatic insects utilizing the stream?"

Together, the Berrywood Homeowner Association, the Watershed Stewards Acad-

emy and the Department of Natural Resources are working to restore the stream to meet the needs of the community and improve aquatic habitat. The Chesapeake and Coastal Service Community Restoration Program is providing technical assistance to help guide the stream repairs, funding strategies and outreach.

The Atlantic and Coastal Bays Trust Fund Natural Filters program is funding the project design, and Berrywood is in discussion with the Anne Arundel County Watershed Protection and Restoration Program about handling the construction phase.

But the work won't stop there. To create a truly ecologically sustainable Cattail Creek, these and similar practices need to be established upstream and throughout the watershed.

Smith envisions, "a beautiful stream, slowly winding its way through the woodlands and wetlands, gently moving into the tidal areas."

The right training, the right methods and the right people are out there to fix this stream, and the residents of Berrywood—led by LaChapelle—stand committed to lead the way in putting it all together. ■

[dnr.maryland.gov/waters](http://dnr.maryland.gov/waters)

Claudia Donegan leads habitat and community restoration projects with the Chesapeake & Coastal Service.





KERRY WIXTED

# Dear Friends of Soldiers Delight

## CELEBRATING OUR MENTORS

By Ranger Jamie Petrucci

### THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT AREA

Comprised of 1,900 acres of serpentine barren—the largest and most diverse on the East Coast—this protected area boasts more than 39 rare, threatened and endangered plant species, as well as rare insects, rocks and minerals.

There are seven miles of marked trails for hikers only. A large visitor center offers meeting rooms, a reference library and exhibits.

One of Maryland's most valuable resources is its people. Throughout my life, some truly awe-inspiring folks exposed to me the wonder of nature—taught me how to appreciate it, took me places to enjoy it and revealed to me how to find it on my own.

This past February, I had the honor of interviewing two such people: Jean Worthley and Les Graef, both 91 years old, both protectors of our Maryland heritage and one of its most unique ecosystems nestled within Owings Mills.

Jean and Les first crossed paths in the 1950s—a time when Baltimore County was growing quickly and Soldiers Delight was in risk of being left off the map.

### Serendipity

In an unexpected but welcome turn in my career, I was recently promoted to manage Soldiers Delight. Within my first week of moving in and organizing my workspace, I came across a copy of *The Complete Family's Nature Guide* by Jean Worthley.

The Maryland Park Service knows her as a champion for Soldiers Delight. I know her as Miss Jean from Maryland Public Television's *Hodgepodge Lodge* in the 70s. It was one of my earliest inspirations to pursue a career as a park ranger.



Jamie interviewing Les and Miss Jean

DREW EVENSEN

As if fate was eager to make a connection, I shared with one of my oldest friends, Les Graef and his wife, Sally, the excitement of my new post, adding that I had found Miss Jean's book and what she meant to me as a child. Les then told me he remembered Jean Worthley from the Citizens for Soldiers Delight project.

Les was in charge of planning major parts of Baltimore County. He was responsible, literally, for putting Soldiers Delight on the map as a protected open space. He recalled meeting Jean more than 50 years ago to voice her plea: this area must be preserved and protected.

### History

I thought about this well into the evening. As I recalled an episode of *Hodgepodge Lodge* filmed at Soldiers Delight, the words of the man who essentially saved it echoed in my head. I'm now a ranger, given the gift of managing that same land. The world is a circle.

Where Jean left off when I was a boy, Les picked up. As a Boy Scout leader, he led Troop 742 for more than 30 years. He taught us *Leave No Trace* principles before they even existed. He taught us the value of serving the community, leading us to volunteer for such projects as the Jerusalem Mills restoration, Appalachian Trail workdays and Habitat for Humanity.

Jean's public television series was instrumental in another way. It brought nature to children who didn't necessarily have the opportunity to explore it. Miss Jean was Baltimore's own naturalist *Mister Rogers*, with her quiet demeanor and sweet way.

I thought how great it would be to get these two together, to record some conversation, some memories, some wisdom. I spent the next few days tracking down Miss Jean and asked them both if they would agree to an interview.

They did.

### The interview

Miss Jean graciously invited us to gather at her home.

Driving down her lane, the first thing I noticed was an old tilted mailbox, surrounded by last year's tall brown grass. I could still clearly read the faded but proud words *Hodgepodge Lodge*.

As Les, Sally and I entered through a sliding glass door into the parlor, the warmth of the fire enveloped us, and two yellow labs welcomed us with kisses and wagging tails. Miss Jean's 91st birthday had been two days prior, and several family members were there to join our circle.

I sat mesmerized, enjoying every word. Jean explained Soldiers Delight's importance in exquisite detail.

Les spoke of his role and of how Miss Jean and her cohorts helped him understand the value of the area.

I am so grateful, and especially appreciate their lives and accomplishments. I hope you enjoy an excerpt of their tales below! ■

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Ranger Jamie Petrucci is the park manager at Soldiers Delight Natural Environmental Area.

**JAMIE:** Miss Jean, great efforts were made by you and a few friends to preserve the area. Can you set the stage for us?

**JEAN:** My children were young and we had a little nature club that met after school. One of the places we took them to explore was Soldiers Delight.

My friend Francis and I got a group together to visit the powers that be in Baltimore County to make it public property. We didn't make much progress. We were good naturalists, but not good lobbyists.

The Citizens' Planning and Housing Authority found us this wonderful woman, Florence Rogers. She was very good with the legislators, but she could make people cry. Her nickname was the Dragon Lady.

She had us standing in front of supermarkets on Saturday mornings, asking folks for a dollar.

We raised \$25,000 ourselves, and [the county] gave \$75,000 to the state to get the ball rolling.

Ten years or so went by and some land was there but no Visitors Center. So she started again and got the Visitors Center. We would joke about how she expected us to put up a statue at the main overlook when she died.

We also asked the [Baltimore] *Sun* for some publicity. They sent their famous photographer, Aubrey Bodine. In those days they had the brown sheet on Sunday, which wasn't very colorful, just different from black and white.

He said, "Where are these rare wildflowers?"

I showed him one that was in full bloom, gorgeous, with a beautiful pink flower. He was crestfallen because he couldn't do it justice in brown and white. But it was a nice spread. It had pictures of the children climbing around. It looked as if they were out west somewhere, miles away from civilization, having a wonderful time.

**JAMIE:** Les, what are some of your memories of the 50s, when you were mapping?



Serpentine barren

RICHARD ORR

**LES:** We were at a time when there was no indication of what might be in parts of Baltimore County. We invited the community to be involved with what we call sector plans. I remember doing the northwest plan, and in it was the first rough outline of what could be at Soldiers Delight.

I remember Florence Rogers, who—I'd call her a bird dog—pressured us to make sure it showed appropriately.

It's nice to hear this wonderful background on Jean and her group. I, frankly, am so pleased to be part of an effort that started with Jean, where now one of my very best friends, Eagle Scout





AUBREY BODINE

Jean, Francis and their children at Soldiers Delight

Jamie Petrucci, is the ranger. It's just incredible. It's serendipity at its best.

**JEAN:** May I say a little bit about how I was introduced to Soldiers Delight?

**JAMIE: Please!**

**JEAN:** My Aunt Helen had been a student at Goucher [College] in 1918. When it closed for the flu epidemic, she had a month or so to ride horseback and explore.

On Sunday mornings in the 1930s, my mother would break a dozen eggs into a jar, stick it in her saddlebag, and we would all ride four miles to Soldiers Delight. We had a delicious breakfast of fresh herring roe, biscuits cooked over the fire and water from the stream to make coffee.

In graduate school in 1946, I met my husband, Elmer. When I took him home to Soldiers Delight, he fell in love with the trees and the light and the little tiny things in nature. As soon as we had children, they had a lot of fun there. So it was natural we would try to help save it.

**JAMIE: Les, you also played a large role in connecting children with nature. Can you tell us about that?**

**LES:** Well mostly, I was with the Boy Scouts. I was in charge of arranging trips all through the region. I cannot believe how many hours we spent in the woods. But it was second nature to love the outdoors and to make sure that young people have an appreciation for it.

**JAMIE: Miss Jean, tell me a little about your show. How did it come about?**

**JEAN:** Well, I had two careers. First I ran two preschools: one in Reisterstown and one in Garrison Forest.

I had studied human development and child studies. One day our minister said to my mother, "We're thinking of starting a pre-school at All Saints. Will you teach?" She said, "No, I can't stand other people's children. But Jean! Jean will be glad to."

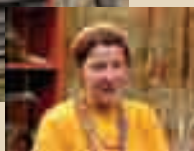
It was like baptism by fire, but it worked out. The next thing I knew, I got a call from the people at St. Thomas asking me to be the director.

I was there for 10 years, and I was getting a bit tired of wiping noses. All of a sudden, I found out there was going to



JEFF KUBINA

Above: Hodgepodge Lodge at the Howard County Conservancy  
Right: Miss Jean on air in the '70s



PUBLIC TELEVISION

be a public television station built nearby. I thought maybe there was something I could do there.

The programming director, Warren Park said, "Think up something you could do for the next age after Sesame Street."

I suggested a nature show and he said, "Ok, you can be this old maid who lives in a log cabin and every day a little boy and girl will come by to see what you have."

**JAMIE: What is your advice to this generation?**

**LES:** For me, the issue in life is curiosity. Without curiosity, there are no questions to be asked and therefore no answers to be gained. So I think that young people should learn how to ask questions and not be shy of doing so.

**JEAN:** I would say to use all their senses. And get away from those cell phones—get outside!

**JAMIE: Is there anything you would like to add that I might not have asked today?**

**LES:** I'd like to say this is a pleasure to be so close at this point in life with a lady who was so involved in what to me was just lines on a map for many years, subsequently to be implemented as a very special park. To be able to live long enough to know there are beautiful people in the world like Jean to instigate efforts like this is just awesome, and I'm so pleased to have this moment to hear her talk so intimately and wonderfully of the place she loves so much.

**JAMIE: I want to thank both of you. You have meant a lot to me my whole life and I appreciate this afternoon to talk to you both.**

## FROM THE FIELD MARGARET LASHAR

By Stephen Badger

Those following this year's legislative session know it ended with a triumphant victory for land conservation. House Bill 462 restores and protects transfer tax-funded land conservation, preservation and recreation programs such as the Maryland Agricultural Land Preservation Fund, Rural Legacy Program and—perhaps most importantly—Program Open Space.

Created in 1969, Program Open Space funds the acquisition and development of state and local land, as well as the preservation of unique natural areas that serve as habitat for rare and endangered species.

The new law, which was signed by Governor Larry Hogan this past April, will bring \$60 million in additional funding to land conservation programs, specifically allocating some of those funds for state land and park development, maintenance and recreation purposes.

Furthermore, the law requires that approximately \$242 million in funds taken from the program over the last decade be repaid. It also establishes new procedures for all future appropriations, transfers and reimbursements.

For details about how it all works, I spoke with one of our program administrators, Margaret Lashar, of the department's Land Acquisition and Planning Unit. ■

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**Stephen Badger** is a public affairs specialist in the department's Office of Communications.



STEPHEN BADGER

### Tell, what do you do for the program?

As an administrator for Program Open Space, I work with county and municipal officials, project managers and planners to get their projects through the grant process. I assist them with submitting applications, project review and approval.

I also conduct periodic inspections to ensure new projects are moving forward and completed projects are maintained for public use.

### Where are people likely to find Program Open Space projects?

Most Marylanders live within 15 minutes of an open space or recreational area funded by Program Open Space. From South Mountain State Park in western Maryland to Pocomoke State Forest on the Eastern Shore, to the playgrounds, ball fields, swimming pools, trails and parks in our local communities, many of these facilities were established with department funds.

### How does it work?

There are two components to Program Open Space—Stateside and Local.

Stateside preserves natural areas for public recreation as well as watershed and wildlife protection across Maryland through the purchase of fee-simple and easement acquisitions. The department manages fee-simple purchases as state parks, forests, and fisheries and wildlife management areas. A portion of funds is also dedicated to capital improvements, critical maintenance and operations in state parks.

Local provides funds to Maryland's 23 counties and Baltimore City for the planning, acquisition and development to meet their specific local land conservation and recreation goals. Funds are allocated on an annual basis. The counties may distribute a portion of their funds to their municipalities based on their own policies.

### What's one memory of a particularly meaningful project you worked on?

One of the best aspects of my job is seeing conceptualized projects come to fruition and enjoyed by the public. The recently completed boat ramp at Fort Smallwood Park in Anne Arundel County is a great example of multi-agency collaboration where federal, state and local funds were combined to develop a much-needed facility for boating and water access.



Fort Smallwood ground breaking, October 2014



Fort Smallwood grand opening, April 2016

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IF THERE IS MAGIC ON THIS PLANET,  
IT IS CONTAINED IN WATER. -LOREN EISELEY